



ADOLESCENT AND SCHOOL HEALTH: PROMOTING HEALTHY BEHAVIORS AMONG YOUTH

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Each day 6,000 young people try their first cigarette.
- Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42% in 1991 to 32% in 2001.
- Almost 80% of young people do not eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables.
- Nearly 25% of young people are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.
- Every year, almost 870,000 adolescents become pregnant and about 3 million become infected with a sexually transmitted disease.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In 1987, in response to the growing impact of HIV infection, CDC began funding state and local education agencies for HIV prevention education. In 1992, while continuing to provide funding to all states for HIV education, CDC started a new initiative to support coordinated school health programs that reduce chronic disease risk factors: poor eating habits, physical inactivity and tobacco use. In FY 2002, CDC supported 20 state-coordinated school health programs. In addition, more than 40 professional and volunteer organizations work with CDC to develop model policies, guidelines and training to assist states in implementing high-quality school health programs.

Example of program in action: In 2001, in collaboration with several University of Wisconsin departments, the state's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) used CDC funds to institute an annual Best Practices in Physical Activity and Health Education Symposium for teachers that showcases exemplary school-based physical activity, physical education, and health education. The programs featured are described in a DPI-produced booklet that promotes innovation in school physical activity and health education programs.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Three known risk behaviors often established during youth--tobacco use, unhealthy dietary behaviors and inadequate physical activity--contribute significantly to today's major causes of death: heart disease, cancer, diabetes and injuries. Research has established that school health programs effectively reduce the prevalence of health risk behaviors among youth. Funded state and local education agencies will continue to provide youth with a healthy school environment and the information and skills needed to avoid these risk behaviors. CDC will assist these agencies in improving the overall quality of their school health programs by strengthening school health policies, improving curricula and instruction, training staff, involving families and communities in school health education and evaluating program effectiveness.

For additional information on this and other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/programs.

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